



March 2019

The Vision

News and Updates from and about the Kentucky Department for Community Based Services
Eric T. Clark, Commissioner

From the Commissioner

Our Kentucky winter is coming to an end. This season of weather so varied – ice and subzero temperatures, heavy rain, sunshine and 60s – could be a metaphor for our working environment at DCBS. It can be unpredictable and almost always extreme, but our team is prepared and well-equipped to manage it.

I'm proud of our recent efforts in several areas. We continue to build on our child welfare transformation along with our stakeholders. The word is spreading that child welfare belongs to us all! Our public assistance staff managed the effects of the partial government shutdown this winter – coordinating early distribution of funds two consecutive months and directing customers to further resources available.

March is Social Work Month. To the social services staff of this department: I am grateful to you for representing this agency and caring for our customers with the patience and social responsibility your jobs require. This Cabinet's broad mission includes taking steps to better our communities and our disadvantaged population. We could not achieve our goals without you and the relationships you have with those who need us the most. You serve with purpose and professionalism in very challenging circumstances. You selflessly serve the people of Kentucky around-the-clock year-round. You are unsung heroes. Thank you, social work staff!

Legislative Update

- Part 2 of the 2019 Regular Session convened on Feb. 5, 2019. Bills of particular interest relating to child welfare include House Bill 158, which contains the department's legislative priorities concerning background checks for employees of child-caring facilities and child-placing agencies and a Foster Child Bill of Rights, and House Bill 2, establishing a custodial, permanency, and service options for relative and fictive kin caregivers. DCBS is supportive of both bills. The Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner have testified before the legislature in support of the bills, and they are auspiciously moving through the General Assembly.
- DCBS has reviewed almost 50 pieces of legislation affecting the department so far. The last day to file new Senate bills was Feb. 15 and the last day to file new House bills was Feb. 20. The department will continue to review committee substitute bills and amendments as they relate to DCBS. The last day of Session is scheduled for March 28, but that includes 10 days for the Governor to veto bills in which the General Assembly takes no action. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to DCBS' outstanding bill reviews!



Commissioner Eric Clark testified on Feb. 27 on HB 158, which creates a "Foster Child Bill of Rights." Also speaking were former foster youth Cameron Galloway and Joshua Degnan, Sen. Matt Castlen and sponsor Rep. David Meade. The bill passed unanimously.

Adult Services

- DCBS and the Department for Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) are collaborating to ensure alignment of processes for guardianship petitions. Revisions of DCBS processes are anticipated concurrent with the effective date of a regulatory amendment by DAIL. DCBS continues to participate with the Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholders (WINGS) group, and DCBS staff serves as the chair on the WINGS-Education and Outreach subcommittee.
- DCBS maintains efforts with the National Adult Maltreatment Reporting System (NAMRS) for submission of Kentucky data and the Virginia Tech-Center for Gerontology regarding the intersection of opioids and elder maltreatment. DCBS submitted the 2018 Adult Protective Services data to NAMRS on Feb 26. Data were recently submitted to Virginia Tech to begin the study.
- DCBS, the Ombudsman's Office, and the Office of Legal Services continue to partner to improve administrative hearing and final order processes for the Caregiver Misconduct Registry and the criteria for Adult Protective Services intake and substantiations. A possible regulatory amendment to 922 KAR 5:070 governing Adult Protective Services is under exploration and development.

Child Care

- The W.K. Kellogg grant for expanding home-based child care in Kentucky is moving toward the implementation phase. Advisory team members participated in a two-day workshop Feb. 7-8, where they developed region-specific models to increase quantity and quality of certified family child care homes and to enhance community awareness of early childhood education. Regional partners submitted proposals of their models by March 1 with implementation planned for April.
- As of Feb. 20, 38,959 child care staff member background checks have been initiated through the National Background Check Program. Fitness determination staff recently updated provider instructions on how to complete interstate background checks, including hyperlinks to each of the 50 states' central registry forms and sex offender websites.
- The Kentucky All STARS Program continues to maintain 48% of participating programs at a high quality All STARS rating level (3-5). All STARS staff worked tirelessly to process Annual Quality Reviews, Standard Verification Check Lists, and administer Environmental Rating Assessments. Dedication from both the All STARS Staff and the Child Care Programs has resulted in over 137 processes completed and over \$600,000 in All STARS Incentives awarded in February.



In February, experts in early childhood education from across the state convened for a workshop to design models aimed at expanding high quality home-based child care for infants and toddlers as part of a grant from W.K. Kellogg.

- DCBS is actively engaged in the Early Childhood Advisory Council's subcommittees supporting the Preschool Development Grant awarded in December to the Governor's Office of Early Childhood. Large projects anticipated from the grant, having intersection with the administrative and service functions of DCBS, include an update of the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards and professional development framework, infant/toddler education initiatives, and apprenticeship programs for high school students in the field of early childhood education.
- 922 KAR 2:160&E, governing the Child Care Assistance Program, were filed Dec. 1 effecting reimbursement rate increases for child care providers among other policy initiatives supported by new federal discretionary funding. Public comments received are under review for response. An agency response to comments is currently being drafted to be filed by March 15.

Child Welfare Transformation

The first Child Welfare Transformation regional meetings with supervisors and service region leadership will conclude in March with Eastern Mountain Service Region. The other eight regions were completed in February.

The Child Welfare Transformation workgroups continued to meet through February. DCBS continues to receive the support and expertise of Casey Family Programs in these efforts.

From the Workforce Supports Workgroup:

- The Culture of Safety implementation began Feb. 14-15, with the Executive Safety Institute leading training for leadership. Participants included leadership staff from the Commissioner's Office, Division of Protection and Permanency, Division of Service Regions, and the Service Region Administrators.

From the Prevention Supports Workgroup:

- Chapin Hall consultants attended the workgroup meeting to begin discussions on which provisions of the Family First Prevention Services Act (Pub. L. 115-123) would be the work of the group.
- DCBS has engaged resources through Casey Family Programs to process map prevention services.

From the Foster Care and Adoption Workgroup:

- DCBS is working with the Office of Administrative and Technology Services (OATS) and the Kentucky State Police (KSP) on interim and long-term solutions to expedite the process of background checks for prospective foster/adoptive parents. DCBS has also begun initial designing of background checks for staff of child care institutes per the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 and House Bill 158 from the 2019 Regular Session

From the Relative Placement Supports Workgroup:

- Administrative regulations to clearly outline the enhanced service array, legal options, and full disclosure (of options) for relative/fictive kin caregivers were filed Dec. 13, and received public comment.
- DCBS continues to develop the policy, home study requirements, and training for a new foster home certification type as an option for relative and fictive kin caregivers. The federal Children's Bureau has been advised of Kentucky's intent to develop this new foster home type. The new foster home type and field training will be deployed this spring.
- Supported through the federal Kinship Navigator funds awarded to Kentucky, staff is also currently working to add relative and fictive kin supports information to the kinship navigator section of KY FACES. The new resource was launched in mid-February.
- As of Feb. 25, \$12.7 million have been issued to relative and fictive kin caregivers as a result of the D.O. v. Glisson ruling.

From the Fiscal Modernization Workgroup:

- The next meeting of the House Bill 1 study group on privatization was March 1 and included literature review and expert panel discussion. The group is slated to hold six more meetings between March 1 and July 1, the due date for the group's recommendations. Casey Family Programs is providing additional expertise with process mapping to aid in the group's deliberations of possible areas of the foster care continuum that could be privatized further.
- DCBS continues to work with the Department for Medicaid Services regarding language for the State Fiscal Year 2020 Managed Care Organization (MCO) contracts and request for proposal for managed care in the next budget biennium, inclusive of one MCO for foster children. This work pairs well and is timed with the decoupling efforts of the foster care rates reimbursed to private child-caring facilities and child-placing agencies.
- DCBS has secured the services of the Public Consulting Group, Inc. (PCG) in its decoupling efforts and modified claiming under Title IV-E. DCBS will be submitting a revised federal claiming form for Title IV-E funds in February. The revision to the form will ultimately facilitate claiming under the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018.



Jefferson Service Region staff asked questions about implementation at their Child Welfare Transformation meeting on Feb. 12.

Public Assistance



- Due to the partial government shutdown, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) advised states to issue as many February Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits as possible by Jan. 20. Kentucky was able to issue 93% of the SNAP caseloads February benefits early. This early release was done to ensure SNAP participants would receive February benefits in the event of a continuing shutdown. Once the shutdown ended, FNS and states began to consider the problem of the length of time SNAP participants would have between February and March monthly issuances, 40 or more days, if no action was taken to decrease that interval. To mitigate this interval, Kentucky proposed a plan to issue March benefits with a March 1 availability date. This ensured most households have no more than 40 days between February and March monthly issuances.
- Kentucky's 1115 Medicaid Waiver has been reapproved by the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services. Kentucky HEALTH is slated to begin as soon as April 1, 2019. DCBS Central Office staff continue to work with Deloitte to launch a new series of training to prepare DCBS field staff, assisters, staff of the Department of Workforce Development, citizens, and other stakeholders for the Kentucky HEALTH go-live. Training for field staff began in February. Subject matter experts from the DCBS Division of Family Support have been in attendance.
- On Oct.17, DCBS launched a new research project aimed to improve recipient engagement with the SNAP Employment and Training Program (E&T). Deloitte Digital worked through October and November interviewing SNAP recipients, DCBS and Kentucky Career Center staffs, SNAP 50-50 partners, and employers to identify what works and what can be improved in SNAP E&T. On Nov. 29 and Dec. 19, Deloitte Digital hosted Research Immersion workshops for stakeholders to review what was learned and to begin developing solutions to improve SNAP E&T. In January, concepts were presented, and the three concepts chosen for Deloitte Digital to execute are Welcome to E&T, Introducing E&T, and My Path. The SNAP E&T Steering Committee met on Feb. 14, and discussed the draft concepts presented by Deloitte Digital. Work on the Concepts began in February.
- The Department of Workforce Investment (DWI) advised that three of the 10 Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB) have exercised the clause to cancel their contracts for SNAP E&T, in addition to the two LWDBs that did not assume SNAP E&T at the start of the State Fiscal Year. DWI staff will provide services while CHFS and DWI are working on an interim solution for the five LWDBs, until the new vendor for KY HEALTH community engagement and SNAP E&T is put in place perhaps by July 1 contingent upon the procurement process and litigation.
- 921 KAR 3:050, Claims and additional administrative provisions, was amended to improve claim collections for overpayments and fraud in SNAP, thereby supporting program integrity. The amendment passed with no objections and became effective Feb. 21.

Self-Care Corner

Self-care is a vital but often overlooked part of professional wellness. The work we provide to our customers, stakeholders -- and even each other -- can take a toll on well-being. Self-care is necessary to our health and stress management. We can only support the needs of others when we first care for ourselves. This feature offers self-care tips for staff to boost their mood, confidence and self-esteem.

Take care of your physical health

- When your body is strong and resilient, you will feel better and have a better time maintaining good mental habits.
- Be active every day. Exercise can take many forms. If you don't have time to take a class or a 20-minute walk or run, try parking farther from your work entrance or taking the stairs rather than the elevator.
- Eat well. Choose unprocessed foods like whole grains, vegetables and fresh fruit. Drink more water and fewer sugary drinks.
- Get enough good sleep. Adults generally need between seven and nine hours of sleep. Make your sleep count more by avoiding screen time -- TV, phone, computer -- an hour before bed and in your bedroom.

Personnel and Operations

- The projected roll-out of self-time entry with the Service Regions was postponed due to complications with the self-time entry application. Once technical issues are fixed, the roll-out will commence.
- DCBS is closely monitoring employees' comp time balances and, when applicable, instructing employees to use comp time instead of annual time. This is an effort to reduce overtime costs to DCBS.
- The current Fostering Success students will complete the program in February. Due to some of the youth wishing to remain with the agency, DCBS is looking at different avenues allowing them continued opportunity with DCBS.
- Senate Bill 236 from the 2017 Regular Session mandated new child abuse and neglect central registry checks for public schools and expanded authorities for other entities to conduct said checks on a voluntary basis. As a result, the DCBS Division of Administration and Financial Management has received a considerable new influx of check requests showcasing the inefficiencies of the manual check process. In calendar year 2017, 25,689 central registry checks were processed. In calendar year 2018, 69,293 central registry checks were processed. Over 43,000 were processed from July 1 through Dec. 31. DCBS has achieved same-week processing thanks to intensive and concerted efforts of existing, newly recruited, and volunteer staff across DCBS. Going forward, DCBS and the Office of Administrative and Technology Services have developed a technology solution that will provide some automation of manual functions and support timeliness of these checks. The solution should be developed within the month, and user testing should begin in early spring.



Nominate a coworker for a Commissioner's Citation

Would you like to give proper recognition to a coworker with a wonderful work ethic?

Consider nominating a DCBS colleague for a Commissioner's Citation. This award recognizes those who go above and beyond the call of duty to demonstrate excellence in public service. It's a great way to honor the focus and dedication of an employee who goes the extra mile every day or who has made significant contributions to a project.

If you are aware of a deserving DCBS employee, please send their name, contact, and a brief description describing their exceptional service to the email address DCBSCommissioner@ky.gov. While there is not a formal set of criteria to qualify for the citation, please be thorough in your award nomination!